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counter

University of Iowa Center for the Book
Number 1 : Fall 1994

To The Reader

A COUNTER, as most printers know, is the white space within a piece of type, the center of the letter 'O' for instance. Though this definition, like those of so many other words, escaped the editors of the Oxford English Dictionary, they devoted four pages to other usages. So a counter is also a piece of mercantile furniture, across which goods are exchanged for money; or part of a fight ('He knocked him down with a counter-punch!'); or a different way of thinking ('Her thoughts on the matter ran counter to those held by her friends.'). It is a recalcitrant and multi-faceted word, one whose many definitions reflect, we hope, the mix of materials & attitudes that will appear in this newsletter.

Counter was almost started several times in the past, but the Center for the Book, though it has accomplished many fine things during its existence, was uncertain of its actual role within the University community; consequently, the part that *Counter* should play in the life of the Center was equally uncertain. We knew we did not want it to mirror other newsletters, merely reporting in a self-satisfied way the accomplishments of the Center's staff and students, though we wanted this information included. More than that, however, we wanted to present materials that reflected the Center's educational & creative missions, bringing to the readers that broad range of scholarly & artistic information which is usually found in journals.

The *Self-Study* and the *Internal Review,* which are discussed below, have given us a deeper knowledge of our educational goals, and have thus given us a better, though not a complete, understanding of what *Counter* should become. While this first issue is still a *mélange,* future ones will begin to show the shape and scope of the materials we wish to share with our readers. An example in this issue, for instance, is the interview with Max Thomas. To accomplish all of our aims for *Counter,* the newsletter may someday turn into a journal. But that is for the future to decide. –K.K. Merker, Director

The Center for the Book Undergoes Self-Study

LAST year members of the Center for the Book began the lengthy process of reviewing the Center's history and accomplishments and articulating a vision for its future. This was no small task, since the Center has existed informally since about 1978, and was established as a formal academic unit in the University in 1986. The Self-Study, undertaken at the invitation of the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, required a new level of collaboration and self-definition from the members of the Center, and their consensus about the Center's future issued in the following mission statement. This mission was enthusiastically endorsed by the Internal Review Committee. Now we await the decision of the Dean.

The mission of the Center for the Book is to become a comprehensive, interdisciplinary program for scholarly research in the study of the book, & for the creative practice of the arts and technologies of the book. The Center currently is home to a unique configuration of creative workshops offering an unparalleled environment for artistic collaboration. The academic and scholarly program planned will complement the workshops with a curriculum in the various histories of the book, its role in culture, and contemporary theoretical approaches to its study. The interactive goals of the Center's mission which will make the mission possible are:

1: To develop interdisciplinary programs of research and creative activity in book-related studies.

2: To train scholars and artists to solve intellectual and practical problems associated with the book.

3: To encourage theoretical and cultural research on the book, and historical, scientific and critical research on the book-object.

4: To facilitate professional and creative book production and book conservation.

5: To build and maintain an environment in which scholarly, scientific and creative collaborations and interests in the book can flourish.

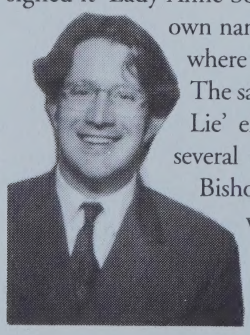
There is No Way to Read Shakespeare Without Reading A Book: An Interview with Max Thomas

MAX Thomas, an assistant professor of English, is new to the University and to the Center for the Book. Here he speaks with Susanna Ashton, a doctoral student in English, about commonplace books and the role of book studies in the English classroom.

You've written on commonplace books in Elizabethan Britain. What attracted you to this project and how would you characterize your approach?

What interested me originally – I didn't come to the project specifically thinking about commonplace books – was printed material. I was thinking about the way Elizabethan readers actually read and encountered poems, and the way poems could vary as they were recopied and reprinted. This variability is even more apparent in commonplace books.

For example, the manuscripts for the poem we know as Walter Raleigh's 'The Lie' attribute it to a number of 'authors.' The compiler of a commonplace book in the Folger Library very carefully copied out the whole poem, and then signed it 'Lady Anne Southworth' – she puts her own name at the end of the poem where we would expect Raleigh's. The same thing happens to 'The Lie' elsewhere; it gets recopied several times and attributed to a Bishop Lateworth. The way we would see it, Lateworth wrote a reply to 'The Lie' – a response poem – but when people recopied the poem–sometimes with the response and sometimes without it–they made *him* the 'author.'



That material practice, where people are actually messing with the text, is important. It is more than Raleigh's text and what someone did with it. The 'text' (which we presume comes before the changes)is actually being constituted in new ways every time it is written down. That is the theoretical impulse which guides my project. I try to look through two kinds of variations: at the changes that are made to a text such as 'The Lie' as it appears in different manuscripts, and at the range of texts within individual commonplace books. These collect together heterogeneous materials: poems, aphorisms, sermons, letters, accounts, recipes all sort of glommed together. These material practices say something about reading and writing poetry.

What more precisely is a commonplace book? We have been talking about the concept of one, but what were they physically? When did they start?

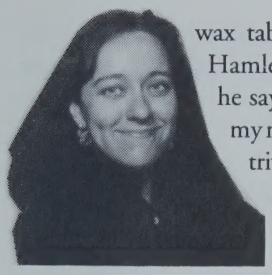
They are sort of equivalent to a modern blank book. They have their roots in medieval Compilatio (where a scribe would be commissioned to compile a series of texts, often copied out in presentation volumes), but commonplace books are less elaborate. They vary in size, in length, in the kinds of texts they include. Often, too, you would give someone a blank table book as a gift.

A table book?

That's what it was called. The 'table' actually refers to wax tablets inscribed with a stylus. You could carve the words into the wax and you could erase them. The word ['table'] gets transformed to refer to 'regular' books – a codex of paper. But the metaphor of the tablet remains.

Would someone inscribe the book before giving it?

I haven't found any that are inscribed in that way but often the recipient would inscribe the book. 'Ex doni Roberti Sharpe' is written in one of the books I've worked with, for instance. It's appropriate that the commonplace book records – or remembers – who gave it, because like a table-book, the commonplace book was envisioned as a way to remember things. You can go back to Plato and his whole discussion of Toth and the invention of writing – once you have an aid to memory you don't have memory itself. But the memory still remains on the



wax tablet – for instance, after Hamlet sees his father's ghost, he says 'Yea, from the table of my memory / I'll wipe away all trivial fond records, / All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past / That youth and observation copied there, / And they commandment all alone shall live / Within the book and volume of my brain. . . .' But, like the mystic writing pad, like the wax tablet, all of those records still remain there, and Hamlet keeps repeating them throughout the play.

Was the term 'commonplace book' used in the 16th century? That phrase has many cultural resonances.

Well, 'commonplace' refers simply to the commonplace aphorism. 'Commonplace book' is probably a slightly anachronistic phrase, but not wildly so. It's appropriate because so much of what people copied into their commonplace books were aphorisms, sententiae – things worth remembering. And often these would find their way into printed form too, where they're often identified as florilegia – flowers of rhetoric; poesies. When Tottle prints his famous miscellany he refers to the poems as beauties that have been in gentlemen's writing, and never before been shared. The commonplace book holds 'beauties.'

So how would someone actually assemble these books? Where would they get the poetry that they would then copy into their commonplace books?

Sometimes they would copy poems out of printed books, or they would copy things someone else had sent to them – if you were sent or came across a poem you liked, for whatever reason, you would copy it into the book. People would also compose their own poems in the commonplace books. I try to put pressure on the idea of composing a commonplace book, and suggest the lines between composition (as inventive production of new texts) and composition (as assembling extant materials) are more closely aligned than we might otherwise consider. The two acts don't differ much: they are done in the same way (collecting and collating florilegia) and they are done on the same page. I don't want to see such a rigid binary, but I want to see a fluidity of composition. Another contention I maintain is that we are led too easily into a binary opposition between print and manuscript – building on the work of people like Elizabeth Eisenstein and Marshall McLuhan – I think that there are some ways that print is still fluid, too. Poems get copied into printed books from manuscripts, the printed books pass themselves off as if they were commonplace books, people copy things from them into their commonplace books.

You mention books. How do book studies inform your pedagogy, if at all?

Actually, they are very important to me, and the example I'll give you is out of my Shakespeare class.

One of the things I am concerned with is considering not only the plays but the status they have: what is it about Shakespeare that people care about? Where does this cultural capital come from? So I ask my students to pay careful attention to the books they are using, and to pay attention to their edition – in my current course we have at least four different editions going. We also look at quartos and the Folio. I ask them to look at the introductions, at the editing, especially in plays like *Lear* or *Hamlet* where there are textual problems. One of the assignments I give is a comparison of modern editions with 18th or 19th century editions. I want my students to pay attention to the preface, to the front matter, explanatory notes, emendations. Their basic task is to infer what the editors of a given edition think is important about Shakespeare.

How do the students tend to respond to this? Do they think you're off your rocker?

Well, they think I'm crazy when I give them the assignment. Once they get there and actually look at the books, it's a different story. It's amazing how many of them spend a lot of time in Special Collections. They get sucked into the project, and discover that what looked like a musty book is actually fascinating.

It's especially important to do this with Shakespeare, who does have the status of National Bard, right? And there is a sense that Shakespeare is this transcendent thing that exists behind the text. What I want my students to do is start thinking about to what extent that transcendent thing is shaped by its presentation – by the immanent thing they read – by the book. There is no way to read

Shakespeare without reading a book, whether that book is made of paper or electrons.

Max W. Thomas received a PhD from the University of Pennsylvania in 1993. His dissertation, 'Practices of Poetry in Early Modern England,' which addresses the circulation, composition, and materiality of commonplace books in late Elizabethan and early Jacobean England, he has since pulped.

Susanna Ashton specializes in late 19th century American literature with a focus on the history and theory of the book. She has written on narrative serialization techniques for *The 19th Century: Journal of the Victorian Society of America,* and is currently researching expatriate presses in Paris during the 1920's, among other things.

Papermaking Goes Electronic With Production of Video Tape Series

LAST summer and fall, paper production at the Center for the Book Papermaking Facilities reached a new and different level of intensity as Tim Barrett, director of the facilities, initiated a very different kind of production. With grants from the University's Video Production Fund and the Center, Barrett wrote and saw through the various complex processes of post-production a series of videotapes called *Papermaking.*

While there are currently video tapes about papermaking on the market, Barrett's are different in their emphasis on the how-to's of both Japanese and Western techniques. The tapes cover all key steps in both methods, and use slow motion and other video effects to highlight crucial movements during sheetforming. During taping, Barrett discovered that video can illustrate papermaking with a degree of clarity impossible in books and manuals. The series is intended as a resource for papermakers, artists, teachers, conservators, or anyone with an interest in hand papermaking.

The titles of the five tapes in the series are: 1) 'Japanese Style Papermaking I – Simple Equipment and Techniques;' 2) 'Japanese Style Papermaking II – Traditional Equipment and Techniques;' 3) 'Japanese Style Papermaking III – Professional Equipment and Techniques;' 4) 'Western Papermaking I – Classroom Equipment and Techniques;' and 5) 'Western Papermaking II – Professional Equipment and Techniques.'

The English language versions of the tapes are now complete, and foreign language versions, to be produced with the assistance of the University Translation Laboratory, will be available based on a demonstrated interest in a given language. To inquire about translations, write in any language to: Translation Laboratory, UICB Papermaking Video Series, w615 Seashore Hall, The University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, 52242.

The English language tape series is priced at $60 each or $250 for the 5-tape set. Foreign Language versions will be $115 each and $500 for the series. Each tape includes a supplier list & a bibliography.

To receive a brochure or to order the tapes, write Papermaking Video Tapes, Center for the Book office, at the address listed here in the directory.

Counter was edited by Rebecca Clouse, with assistance from K.K. Merker and Joe Ranft, who also executed the design using Aldus Pagemaker and Adobe Garamond type. Offset printing by the University of Iowa Printing Department on Nekoosa Natural.

In the next issue: Preserving *De Motu Cordis* ('Peering in on the Conservation Lab'); Report on the Official Response to the Center's Self-Study; Literary Cooking from the Szathmary Culinary Arts Collection; A Word from the Book Arts Club; 'Works in Progress' from Center members. We would also like to include a 'Questions from Readers' section; send us your questions about either the arts and technologies of the book or the histories, theories and cultures of the book, and we will find an expert to answer them. We welcome any suggestions or comments about the contents of this publication; we invite you to tell us what you would like to see in future issues.

Apprentice Bridget O'Malley to Take Up Residence at Minnesota Center for Book Arts

BRIDGET O'Malley ended her five-year apprenticeship at the Center's Paper Facility on May 31, and moved to Minneapolis to become Artist in Residence in Papermaking at the Minnesota Center for Book Arts. A new paper she developed this spring (sample attached) adds significantly to the Center's paper line. While natural black walnut dye has been used for some time to color the standard PC4 and B8 papers, Bridget decided to use the dye in conjunction with a resist of gelatin size. She sized a regular sheet of B8 flax book paper, let it dry, and then creased and crushed it, working the sheet with her hands. When she dipped the sheet in the black walnut stain, the gelatin prevented the dye from being absorbed, except where the size had been cracked by the creasing and crushing. Everyone is very pleased with the results.

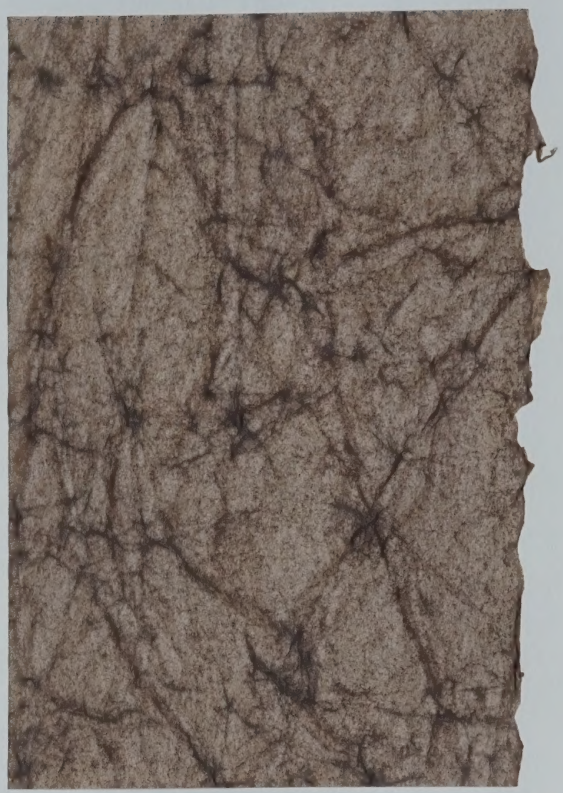
A sample of Bridget's walnut paper came into the Windhover Press just as the final sheets of Robert Desnos' *Contrée/Country*, translated by William Kulik, were being printed by Don Howell. A few days before, a red cloth binding-dummy of the book had arrived from Campbell-Logan. Timing and a cluttered press table brought Bridget's paper and the dummy together, and out of this fortuitous circumstance came a beautiful red version of Bridget's walnut-stained B8 sheet. This limited edition paper (It will not be included in the paper catalogue.) was used to cover the boards in the quarter-bound Desnos volume.

Before she left, Bridget developed two more equally exciting papers. She stained the standard PC4 Red and PC4 Blue with one coat of walnut, and the results are stunning.

Jana Pullman, the Center's newest papermaking apprentice, is from Salt Lake City, where she worked at the University of Utah Marriot Library as supervisor of the hand repair of the general collection. Jana's four-year apprenticeship includes research in conservation papers, and is funded in part through a grant from the Kress Foundation.

Samples of Center papers are available at no charge by writing to Timothy Barrett at the Paper Facilities.

Paper Sample, PB4 Walnut



Center for the Book Directory

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3 0112 077788310

Center Members Works in Progress

Pamela Spitzmueller, **Glen Epstein** and **Tim Barrett** are involved in a unique collaboration called 'Out of Your Element.' Each of them, of course, has a specialty: Pam's is binding and conservation, Glen's is calligraphy, Tim's is papermaking. In this project, each participant leaves his or her specialty behind and does someone else's.

Tim Barrett delivered a series of lectures at the Grolier Club this past winter. He was part of the Dieu Donne Handmade Paper Lecture Series; he addressed the Guild of Bookworkers, and the American Printing History Association, New York Chapter. The latter talk will appear in a forthcoming issue of *Printing History*. Tim will be a guest lecturer in August at the University of Virginia Rare Book School.

Kim Merker recently completed printing Robert Desnos' collection of poems *Contrée/Country*, translated by William Kulik, and printed *en face*. Next is *Divided Touch, Divided Color* by Kathleen Peirce, with woodcuts by Margaret Fitzgerald.

Merker's traveling exhibit, 'Kim Merker: Thirty-Five Years of Fine Printing,' has visited eight institutions so far, beginning with the University of California, Riverside (the exhibit's sponsor). The exhibit traveled to Rochester Institute of Technology in Spring 1993, then to Washington University in St. Louis, the Universities of Washington (Seattle) and San Francisco, and to close out 1993, to Ohio University in Athens. In early Spring 1994, the exhibit was installed at the Newberry Library in Chicago, and it is now at Arizona State University. Further destinations include Brown University, and the Universities of Kentucky, Virginia, and, in 1995, Iowa.

Sidney Berger, who is largely responsible for scheduling the Merker exhibit, has been at work for the past few years on another major Merker project. This November, Berger's work will culminate in the publication, by W. Thomas Taylor, of *A Bibliography of the Printing of Kim Merker*, compiled, annotated and with an introduction by Berger, with notes from Harry Duncan and Dana Gioia. The bibliography will include black and white plates illustrating some of the books, pamphlets and ephemera printed by Merker under the Stone Wall, Windhover and Center for the Book imprints. Merker has provided detailed commentary on many of the items listed in the bibliography.

David Hamilton has two major projects at *The Iowa Review*: a 300-page issue given entirely to 'transgressive' fiction, and an anthology drawn from the Review's first 25 years. Both will be published as books by The University of Iowa Press.

Glen Epstein has completed the text and collages for the *1995 Extraordinary Americana Calendar*. And, he has been busy with a logo for the University of Alabama's *Black Warrior Review*, a title page for that same publication and for Howell Raines's *The Search for a True History of Alabama*, to be published by Red Hydra Press. He also designed the title block of *Counter*.

Pam Spitzmueller recently gave a Guild of Bookworkers-sponsored workshop on Atlas Structures to the New York Academy of Medicine. Also, the National Museum of Women commissioned her to make a copper binding for its collection.

Five Center Members participated in the University of Iowa Libraries' Chautauqua '94 'In Celebration of the Book: From Author to Reader.' **David Hamilton** moderated the panel, 'Creating a Literary Work: A Discussion,' which focused on the writing, illustrating, publishing and reading of Patricia Hampl's book Spillville. In 'A Literary Fair,' **Tim Barrett** demonstrated papermaking, **Pam Spitzmueller** demonstrated book binding and conservation, **Glen Epstein** demonstrated calligraphy, & **David Schoonover** gave a multimedia presentation 'Rare Books: Old and New,' a full-color computer 'slide-show' of scanned manuscript pages ranging in age from the late middle ages to the late 20th century.

This summer **Jim Snitzer** and **Kim Merker** will collaborate on a Windhover Press publication *Vassar Viewed Veraciously*, 20 pencil sketches of the campus done by Wallace Stevens in 1931, when the poet visited Vassar with his wife and daughter. Snitzer will reproduce the drawings at the Center's Offset Workshop, while Merker will print – letterpress, from handset type – the introduction by Dan Woodward, Senior Researcher at the Huntington Library, which holds the original drawings.